

Message Text

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ACTION EA-04

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FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3964

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1198

LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CH

SUBJECT: G.P. LI MEETING WITH CHOU EN-LAI

1. U.S. PROFESSOR CHEN PIEN LI MET WITH PRC PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI YESTERDAY. NCNA FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A YEAR DID NOT SAY THE MEETING TOOK PLACE "IN THE HOSPITAL" AND PEOPLE'S DAILY UNDERSCORED THE POINT OF CHOU'S IMPROVED HEALTH BY SHOWING HIM STANDING WITH PROFESSOR LI OUTSIDE A CHINESE-STYLE HOUSE RATHER THAN INSIDE.

2. ACCORDING TO DR. LI, WHO CALLED ON MR. BUSH THIS MORNING, THE THIRTY MINUTE MEETING WAS MOSTLY TAKEN UP WITH SOCIAL CHITCHAT, INCLUDING A LONG DISCUSSION OF FRUIT. CHOU PROVED TO BE SOMEWHAT OF AN AUTHORITY ON DISTRIBUTION OF FRUIT IN THE UNITED STATES AND PRESENTED LI WITH LYCHEES TO TAKE BACK WITH HIM. THE MEETING OCCURRED IN A "VILLA BESIDE A LAKE IN THE HEART OF PEKING", PRESUMABLY IN CHUNGNANHAI, ALTHOUGH LI SEEMED RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS DETAILS OF CHOU'S HEALTH HE CHARACTERIZED IT AS "GOOD" AND SAID HE DETECTED NO HAND TREMORS OR FALTERING SPEECH.

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3. LI MET ON JUNE 25 WITH VICE FOREIGN MINISTER WANG HAI-JUNG

AND CAME AWAY MORE IMPRESSED WITH HER ABILITIES THAN MOST OTHER OBSERVERS. LI, WHO CARRIED ON THE CONVERSATIONS IN MANDARIN, DESCRIBED WANG AS "VERY BRIGHT, ABLE, AND SELF-ASSURED." WANG, TANG WEN-SHENG, AND MFA PROTOCOL CHIEF CHU CHUAN-HSIEN ALSO TOOK PART IN THE MEETING WITH CHOU.

4. LI HAS ALSO TALKED WITH OTHER OFFICIALS HERE AND MADE THE OBSERVATION TO US THAT LOWER LEVEL OFFICIALS IN PEKING ARE MORE RIGID IN THEIR THINKING AND MORE STRONGLY AGAINST THE US THAN THE HIGHER OFFICIALS.

5. COMMENT: LI, A RETIRED NIH EMPLOYEE, CAME TO CHINA WITH DR. J. WEI-PING LOH OF GARY, INDIANA, TO VISIT RELATIVES AND PROMOTE MEDICAL EXCHANGES. HE ALSO SEES HIMSELF AS SOMETHING OF A MIDDLE-MAN TO PROMOTE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. AND CHINA. HE MET MAO TSE-TUNG DURING HIS 1973 VISIT ON THE BASIS OF A STUDENT FRIENDSHIP WITH MAO FROM CHANGSHA DAYS. HE DOES NOT EXPECT TO MEET MAO THIS TIME BUT THE MEETING WITH CHOU MAKES CLEAR HE HAS CONTINUED ACCESS TO THE TOP PRC LEADERSHIP.
BUSH

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